

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Abraham Lincoln to Henry J. Raymond [Draft]<sup>1</sup>, August 24, 1864

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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln was, as his correspondence amply shows, at this time under great pressure to make some gesture in the direction of peace talks with the Confederacy. On Aug. 22, the editor of the *New York Times* and a staunch supporter of the president, Henry J. Raymond, fearful of a disastrous defeat in the upcoming election, had written to urge the formation of a commission "to make distinct proffers of peace to Davis, as the head of the rebel armies, on the sole condition of acknowledging the supremacy of the constitution, — all other questions to be settled in a convention of the people of all the States?" The plan outlined in this letter was Lincoln's response, but before sending the letter, which survives only in a pencil draft, he apparently discussed the plan with members of his cabinet. Lincoln's secretary, John G. Nicolay, described a meeting on Aug. 25 in which the president and certain members of the cabinet persuaded Raymond that "to follow his plan of sending a commission to Richmond would be worse than losing the Presidential contest — it would be ignominiously surrendering it in advance." (*Collected Works*, VII, 518)

Executive Mansion.

Washington, August 24. 1864.

Sir:

You will proceed forthwith and obtain, if possible, a conference for peace with Hon. Jefferson Davis, or any person by him authorized for that purpose—

You will address him in entirely respectful terms, at all events, and in any that may be indispensable to securing secure the conference—

At said conference you will propose, on behalf of this government, that upon the restoration of the Union and the national authority, the war shall cease at once, all remaining remaining questions to be left for adjustment by peaceful modes— If this be accepted hostilities to cease at once—

If it be not accepted, you will then request to be informed what terms, if any embracing the restoration of the Union, would be accepted— If any such be presented you in answer, you will forthwith report the same to this government, and await further instructions.

If the presentation of any terms embracing the restoration of the Union be declined, you will then request to be informed what terms of peace would, be accepted; and on receiving any answer, report the same to this government, and await further instructions.

[Endorsed on Envelope by Lincoln:]

H. J. Raymond — about peace.